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ABSTRACT

This paper envisions what a standards-based second language methods course might look like. In exploring the possibilities, the paper describes a current model for preservice training, generalizations gleaned from a study of a second language methods syllabi archive, and an analysis of and reflection upon a particular second language methods course. In examining the syllabus, the paper uses three types of instruments (a reflective self-evaluation of the course, a course alignment grid, and comments from student evaluations of the course over 5 years). Examination of the syllabus provides insights into the ways methods classes must adapt to provide preservice experiences that promote the required knowledge base, skills, and characteristics of second language teachers. The paper concludes with suggestions for preservice training for second language educators. Charts of standards assessed by the various class sessions are included. An appendix presents a list of 10 standards for competent foreign language teachers. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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*Envisioning a Standards-Based Methods Course: Preparing Second Language Educators for the 21st Century**

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*Envisioning a Standards-Based Methods Course: Preparing Second Language Educators for the 21st Century**

KATHLEEN BUENO, Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville

This article envisions what a standards-based second language methods course might be. In exploring the possibilities, the author presents a description of a current model for pre-service training, generalizations gleaned from a study of a second language methods syllabi archive, and an analysis of and reflection upon a particular second language methods course. The article concludes with suggestions for pre-service training for second language educators.

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of a new century encourages reflection on recent accomplishments and on the challenges that lie ahead. During the past two decades, accomplishments in second language education have been impressive. Initiatives in the 1980s provided guidelines for measuring proficiency in a second language (*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*, 1986). Collaborative efforts in the 1990s articulated a unified vision for the profession by establishing a national set of standards and a set of student performance guidelines (*Standards for Foreign Language Learning: Preparing for the 21st Century*, 1996). These accomplishments give direction to current efforts by state boards of education and local school districts to promote the development of second language skills and knowledge needed in the new century. These same accomplishments also pose new challenges for second language educators. One crucial challenge centers on determining the knowledge base and competencies required to develop and to carry out standards-based second language instruction.

Current research on teacher education supports a reflective model for designing pre-service development (Schon, 1987; Wallace, 1991; Hudelson and Faltis, 1993; Kassen and Higgins, 1997). The reflective model characterizes professional development as

> the result of the interaction of received knowledge, a field's collective body of information from research, theory and conventional wisdom, and experiential knowledge, which includes both practice and conscious reflection on that practice. (Kassen and Higgins, 1997, p. 268)

The North Central Regional Education Laboratory's (NCREL's) research-based framework outlines the necessary components of the reflective model. These include

> building a knowledge base, observing models and examples, reflecting on practice, changing practice, and gaining and sharing expertise. (Cited in Kassen and Higgins, 1997, p. 268)

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Key to this model of pre-service training are "repeated cycles of practice and informed critical reflection" (p. 265).

Over the past few years, considerable discussion has centered on the knowledge and skill base needed to effectively carry out standards-based second language instruction. In the summer 1998 issue of the *ACTFL Newsletter*, Glisan and Phillips outline suggested goals for second language teacher preparation. Their summary incorporates ideas gleaned from the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (1994), the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996), and research studies in teacher education (Hudelson and Faltes, 1993; Schrier, 1993). These goals encompass desired knowledge bases, skills, and characteristics of second language teachers. The knowledge bases and skills include a high degree of proficiency in the language to be taught, an appropriate level of knowledge of the target culture(s), knowledge of current research on second language acquisition, understanding of and skill in delivering communicative language teaching methods, and knowledge and ability to effectively integrate technology in second language instruction.

The characteristics entail a commitment to continued professional development, a positive attitude toward student learning, a dedication to the role of manager and monitor of learning, a devotion to analysis and reflection on the effectiveness of one's teaching, and a collaborative orientation to teaching and the profession. This summary serves as a starting point for envisioning a model for standards-oriented second language methodology course.

A Profile Of Second Language Methods Courses

"FLTeach"(www.cortland.edu/flteach/syllabi/) contains an archive of foreign-language methods course syllabi. A comparative study of the goals and class activities described in a selected group of eight syllabi that represent different regions around the country provides a useful profile. Five of the methods courses are located in either colleges of arts and sciences or in schools of humanities. Three are housed in schools of education. The course goals shared by all of the instructors include

- An understanding of the second language teaching/learn-ing process
- Effective techniques for teaching and evaluating the progress of second language learners
- Familiarity with multiple resources to enhance second language learning
- An introduction to technology and hands-on practice
- Familiarity with second language teaching approaches

- An understanding of how to integrate culture in the foreign language curriculum

In addition, at least half of the instructors also covered the following goals:

- Familiarity with the national standards

- Development of a picture file

These goals form a portrait of the current conventional wisdom regarding second language teacher preparation.

Comparisons of the variety of activities that exist on the syllabi provide further insights into the nature of experiences provided pre-service teachers by the second language methods course. Seven of the eight instructors require students to complete supplementary readings, to write lesson plans, to create instructional activities and to participate in class discussions. Six assign oral presentations, final exams, and the creation of rubrics and evaluation instruments. Four include critiques of journal articles, picture files, peer-teaching, and a file of supplementary materials. Three listed web board participation, a series of three- to five-page papers, use of a list serve and textbook evaluation. These seem to constitute common pre-service in-class activities.

The complete set of assigned activities displays additional alternatives. A number of these activities relate to the use of technology. Other activities seem to relate to making connections to research and conventional wisdom. These assignments pay tribute to the dedication and resourcefulness of second language methods instructors as they endeavor to facilitate professional development in the areas of expertise outlined in the first part of this article. They also provide a wider repertoire for later consideration as the process of envisioning continues.

The next step in the envisioning process involves examining a particular methods syllabus in light of the National Standards for foreign language instruction and existing state standards for foreign language learners and for teacher certification. For this purpose, the author has chosen to use the syllabus from her fall 1999 methods course. In examining the syllabus, she has used three types of instruments. The first is a reflective self-evaluation of the course completed in spring 1999. The second is a course alignment grid prepared for this study. Finally, the author has included comments from student evaluations of the course over the past five years. The examination of the syllabus provides insights into the ways methods classes must adapt to provide pre-service experiences that promote the required knowledge base, skills, and desired characteristics of second language teachers.

In the reflective self-evaluation, the instructor described the methods course as "a challenging course to teach." First, it presents a challenge because it draws from several disciplines and relates them to professional practices. Second, the course requires constant updates and experimentation

due to advancements within the profession and in educational technology. As a result, the instructor made significant changes each year, which center on a few key issues that blend instructional concerns with issues raised in course evaluations. These issues include three interrelated concerns: providing a balance between theory and practice, prioritizing topics for inclusion in the course, and determining appropriate course requirements.

Maintaining a balance between theoretical discussion and hands-on practice permeates the literature on pre-service training (Savignon, 1997; Van Patten, 1998; McLaughlin, 1987). In order for pre-service teachers to practice informed critical reflection about their teaching, they need to acquire knowledge about the "who, what, where and how" of second language learning (Savignon, 1997). This includes knowledge about learner attributes, the development of morphological and syntactic features, the process of acquiring a second language, and the learning setting. Comments on student evaluations reflect considerable tension regarding the theory base. One student wrote

> I felt like a fish out of water because even though she was very available, so much of the material was new and hard for me to cognitively organize.

Another student commented

> I didn't enjoy the first three chapters [of the textbook] so much, too theoretical.

These statements encapsulate the difficulties and reticence exhibited by pre-service teachers when they are confronted with the knowledge base related to second language instruction in the methods course.

Prioritizing topics for inclusion in the second language methods course requires careful deliberation and curricular planning. Decisions require an analysis of the overall pre-service program to determine which topics constitute the exclusive venue of the second language methods course and which ones need to be recycled within the context of second language teaching. A related concern entails adaptation or substitution when instructors perceive deficiencies in skill development or if state standards are not being met. Student course evaluations provide one source of information. For example, one student commented

> It was nice to have an education course that actually taught how to make a lesson plan.

Another student added

> She [instructor] expects a lot of details that I hadn't previously thought of. I am glad to see this because I need to know this and should be able to present, in detail the tasks that I will need my students to perform.

Field supervision and mentoring opportunities further corroborate the importance of certain topics.

The last of the interrelated issues outlined in the self-evaluation

entails determining course requirements. Each year some mention of the workload appears in the student evaluations. The following comments are representative:

> The instruction was good and I feel that I learned the essentials for teaching a foreign language, I just really think too much homework is given.

> Now that the course is almost over, I am glad to have mastered the workload, but during the course I sometimes wished we had less assignments.

This aspect of the course has undergone the most adaptation over the past five years, including both reduction in topics, the development of on-line resources, and change in the types of assignments required.

A final issue explored in the self-evaluation relates to preparing pre-service teachers to integrate technology in second language instruction. As Kassen and Higgins (1997) attest, providing pre-service training in instructional technology is complicated by the diversity and complexity of educational settings. In addition, students bring varying degrees of familiarity and competency with educational technology. Student comments on evaluations identify the sessions devoted to technology among the positive aspects of the course. For example, one student commented that

> the video and CD ROM section was very interesting.
> I enjoyed learning about this material.

Another student added

> I gained strengths in areas I had been weak before (e.g. using the internet, using PowerPoint).

The instructor continues to expand and update these sessions. Still, determining what background knowledge and what skills will serve pre-service teachers best remains problematic.

In response to the issues raised by the self-evaluation and the students' course evaluations, the author looked for additional resources for course evaluation. Driscoll (1998) provides a useful instrument, the course alignment grid. The purpose of the grid involves aligning and analyzing all class activities and assignments that meet each course objective. Driscoll provides examples of course alignment grids to be completed by both the instructor and the students. In addition, she outlines how grids can be used for course and program evaluation. For the purpose of this discussion, the instructor has adapted the grids appropriately to align all class activities and assignments with the state standards for teacher certification (see Appendix). The resulting charts serve to delineate with more precision and clarity the types of pre-service experiences the methods course provides.

Chart 1 illustrates the standards addressed by the first five class sessions, which focus on the theoretical background knowledge. These sessions include an historical overview of

Chart 1. Standards Addressed by First Five Class Sessions

	Standards (See Appendix)									
Class activities and assignments	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	S-6	S-7	S-8	S-9	S-10
Session 1:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
Textbook reading	X									
Workbook activity	X									
Session 2:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
Textbook reading	X									
Workbook activity	X									
Web board activity	X									
Session 3:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
Textbook reading	X.									
Workbook activity	X									
Web board activity	X									
Session 4:										
Lecture	X	X								
Discussion	X	X								
In-class activity	X									
Textbook reading	X									
Workbook activity	X									
Session 5:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
In-class activity	X	X								
Textbook reading	X	X								
Workbook activity	X	X	X							
Assignment I										

second language education in the United States, an introduction to proficiency and the standards, and a discussion of second language acquisition theories and teaching methodologies.

In early class sessions lecture and discussion predominate. Small-group activities entail organizing facts and comparing theories about different aspects of second language learning. For example, during the second session students complete a chart to show what components of language ability are common to the definitions of communicative competence, com-

municative language ability, and proficiency (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993, p. 35). Some activities, such as, reading descriptions of learners' language ability and determine the proficiency level of each learner apply theory directly to instructional concerns (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993, p. 35).

Most homework assignments include readings, workbook questions and web-board assignments. These out-of-class assignments also center on acquiring the necessary theoretical knowledge to guide instructional planning. The first truly practice-centered assignment occurs following session five. For this assignment, students opt to design a listening activity with a visual aid, to describe five activities that could be done with the same listening material, or to design in-class activities to go with an authentic reading (Omaggio-Hadley, 1993, p. 223). During the first five sessions, pre-service teachers become comfortable with the terminology of second language acquisition and become knowledgeable about the "what" and the "how" of second language acquisition (Savignon, 1997). As one student wrote on the course evaluation: "You were able to listen to us and tie our thoughts into the lesson." The sessions provide knowledge needed to analyze the effectiveness of instruction and instill the values of discussion and collaboration.

Chart 2 displays the activities and assignments for sessions six through ten. These sessions are as follows: discussing accuracy, developing listening and reading skills, developing speaking skills, developing writing skills, and developing cultural awareness. Four of the five sessions include small group activities. These activities range from matching listening and reading skills to proficiency levels to designing activities to meet one of the national standards to completing a textbook evaluation. Three sessions involve homework assignments requiring students to design instructional activities or a detailed lesson plan with activities, resources and evaluative procedures. As the pre-service teachers apply their theoretical knowledge to develop instructional skills, they also utilize their skill in under standing recordings, reading texts and writing materials in the target language. They also employ their knowledge of the target culture(s). Furthermore, opportunities arise to make use of the target language to further knowledge of other disciplines.

Through class activities and homework assignments, pre-service teachers continue to develop their understanding of the "what" and "how" of second language acquisition (Savignon, 1997). At the same time, they develop expertise in designing activities for second language learners. Finally, these activities develop an awareness of their role as manager and monitor of learning.

Chart 3 delineates how the activities and assignments for the last five sessions relate to the state standards. The topics treated in these sessions include test development, the integration of technology, and the process of becoming educators.

Chart 2. Standards Addressed by Second Five Class Sessions

	Standards (See Appendix)									
Class activities and assignments	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	S-6	S-7	S-8	S-9	S-10
Session 6:										
Lecture	X	X								
Discussion	X	X								
In-class activity	X	X							(X)	
Textbook reading	X	X			X					
Workbook activity	X	X								
Assignment II	X	X	X						(X)	
Session 7:										
Lecture	X	X								
Discussion	X	X								
In-class activity	X	X	X							
Midterm Exam	X	X							X	
Session 8:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
In-class activity	X		X	X						
Textbook reading	X									
Workbook activity	X									
Lesson Plan I	X	X	X	X	(X)					
Session 9:										
Lecture	X	X		X						
Discussion	X	X		X						
In-class activity		X		X						
Textbook reading	X	X								
Workbook activity	X	X		X						
Web board activity					X					
Session 10:										
Lecture					X					
Discussion					X					
Textbook reading										
Workbook activity										
Assignment III				X					X	

Chart 3. Standards Addressed by Last Five Class Sessions

Class Activities and Assignments	Standards									
	S-1	S-2	S-3	S-4	S-5	S-6	S-7	S-8	S-9	S-10
Session 11:										
Lecture		X	X							
Discussion	X	X								
Software Evaluation	X	X								
Textbook reading	X	X	X							
Workbook activity	X	X	X							
Web board activity	X									
Lesson Plan II	X	X	X	X	(X)				(X)	
Session 12:										
Lecture	X									
Discussion	X									
In-class activity										
Supplementary readings	X									
Observation notes	X									
Session 13:										
Lecture/Demonstration	X		X	X						
Discussion	X		X	X						
In-class activity	X		X	X	(X)					
Electronic Search						X			X	
Web-based tutorial										
Session 14:										
Presentations	X	X	X	(X)	X	(X)			X	
Discussion	X	X	X	(X)	X				X	
Teaching unit	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
Power Point	X		X	X	(X)					
Session 15:										
Web-based activity					X				X	
Discussion	(X)				(X)					
Final Exam	X		X	X	X				X	

Half of the class time for sessions eleven through thirteen centers on hands-on practice with technology. Students preview and evaluate software, conduct electronic searches, use PowerPoint to prepare a presentation, and utilize "Filamentality" (www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil) to create a web-based activity. While students engage in these activities, they utilize

the knowledge and skills described in at least three of the standards. For the projects and final exam, students employ knowledge from five to seven standards. In addition, students work collaboratively and share information during the hands-on sessions. The oral presentations of the final project, a teaching unit, are conducted like teacher in-service workshops. These experiences build an awareness of the importance of professional development, collaboration and dedication to the role of manager and monitor of learning.

The course alignment grid provides a clear, concise profile of the methods course. The resulting profile sheds light on both the curricular concerns of the instructor and the certification requirements of the state. For example, the charts trace a progression towards practice-centered activities in later stages. Student comments on evaluations confirm this impression. In addition, the charts record an increase in activities requiring students to employ a wider spectrum of the recommended knowledge and skill areas.

The profile also gives credence to issues of choosing course topics and determining course requirements. The state content standards for foreign language teachers do not include knowledge of and skills in classroom management, a topic previously included in the second language methods syllabus. Since the necessary knowledge and skills regarding classroom management are addressed in courses and fieldwork required by the School of Education, other knowledge required by the state content standards, such as, career opportunities for speakers of a second language can be incorporated in the methods course outline.

Since the course prepares students to teach German, French and Spanish, goals two through eight can only be addressed incidentally. Students can use their knowledge and skills with the target language as they gather and evaluate authentic materials to be used for instructional purposes. The course can only include this type of practice, however, in small group activities or in out-of-class assignments.

Inferences drawn from the course grid and from a thorough study of national and state standards documents provide a solid base for envisioning course content for the methods course. In the case of Illinois, for example, the knowledge base provided primarily by the second language methods course centers on four main areas. First, the second language methods course is the only resource for obtaining the collective body of information on second language acquisition research as applied to classroom learning. Second, the course remains the principal venue for providing models for cultural studies and strategies for developing cultural awareness in classroom lessons.

In addition, the methods course seems the most logical site for preservice teachers to address directly ways to learn about career options for speakers of more than one language. Finally, the Illinois State Board of Education Content-Area Standards for

Educators (2000) require that teachers in all content areas

> apply technologies that support instruction in their grade level and subject areas. He or she must plan and deliver instructional units that integrate a variety of software, applications, and learning tools. Lessons developed must reflect effective grouping and assessment strategies for diverse populations (p. 261).

The national standards also require teachers to manage and monitor such activities as discussion of

> topics from other school subjects in the target language, including political and historical concepts, worldwide health issues, and environmental concerns (p. 51).

The ability to fulfill these mandates requires training from content area specialists who are familiar with the features and capabilities of technological tools and applications that facilitate second language acquisition.

CONCLUSIONS

The meaningfulness of experiences afforded by the second language methods course depends on the structure of the overall pre-service program. Newman (1997) posits that teacher education courses should be problem-based and include action research components. To achieve this change, she recommends increased practica with classroom teachers as mentors, collaborative student projects, independent study modules, and faculty involvement as members of inquiry teams. Russell (1999) adds that early field placements and discussions of experiences in the field provide "significant personal experience of teaching" (p. 9). This personal experience helps pre-service teachers "see the significance of theory both for interpreting experience and for redirecting" their teaching (p. 10). Furthermore, Kosnik (1999) found that action research projects increased pre-service teachers' understanding of the role of the teacher and encouraged effective strategies like collaboration, informed critical reflection and devotion to continued professional development. Finally, Newman (1997) observes that since the school of education faculty is unable to cover all traditional high school subject matters, collaboration across university units becomes crucial. Russell (1999) concurs that liaison roles are key to successful pre-service training. In order to support standards-based professional development, he believes that the liaison role will expand and become more complex. The challenge of adapting and restructuring the methods course will remain an important element in this new complex role.

Within this context of "repeated cycles of practice and critical reflection" (Kassen and Higgens, 1997, p.265), the second language methods course plays a pivotal role. The course serves as a model for continued professional development and informed, reflective practice. Class activities and course assignments blend devotion to analysis and collaborative exploration of pedagogical issues, practice in

managing and monitoring learning, and reflection on the effectiveness of one's teaching. These kinds of experiences are paramount for developing the skill to "translate" (Van Patten 1998) theory into practice and to hone instructional skills that meet "the tests of practicality, personal relevance, and effective results" (Zéphir, 2000).

Kassen and Higgins (1997) provide a general framework for translating theory into practice in regard to pre-service technology training. These scholars posit that the development of knowledge and skills related to technology integration depend on

> establishing a comfort level with technology; integrating technology in the curriculum; and developing the critical skills to use technology effectively (264).

They suggest following the North Central Regional Education Laboratory's research-based framework, which incorporates the necessary components of a reflective model. Throughout the training, in-class activities and out-of-class assignments require students to engage in hands-on practice and critical reflection.

Ideas for implementing this component of the foreign language methods class can be drawn from the syllabi archive mentioned earlier in this study (FLTeach www.cortland.edu/flteach/syllabi/). For example, LeLoup requires students to obtain an electronic mail account and the instructor uses electronic correspondence to disseminate information and assignments to the students. In addition, the students complete an on-line technology module and submit assignments via electronic mail. Kennedy provides a plethora of on-line resources for her students that include articles, a discussion board, and links to web sites. She combines these resources with related assignments that include subscription to a list serve, participation in an on-line chat room for educators and a collection of URLs. Morris includes peer-teaching assignments with technology and Bueno requires PowerPoint presentations, the creation of a web-based activity, and software evaluation.

Kassen's and Higgin's goals of comfort, knowledge, and skill in integrating technological resources can be extended to the other areas of knowledge and skills that second language teachers need. In the author's classes, pre-service teachers often feel overwhelmed by the terminology and concepts of second language acquisition. Moore (1996) found that twenty-three percent of teachers responding to a survey cited that they received inadequate training in regard to integrating culture in their classes. Van Patten (1998) discovered that many classroom teachers have misconceptions regarding communicative language teaching. Yet, these are the essential knowledge and skill areas for providing standards-based instruction. Designing a standards-based methods course entails creating an intricate curricular weave. The design should blend continued patterns of received and experiential knowledge that build comfort, skill, and informed critical

reflection to assure best practices in the second language classes of our nation's schools.

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APPENDIX
THE COMPETENT FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

Standard 1: The competent foreign language teacher comprehends the processes involved in acquiring another language.

Standard 2: The competent foreign language teacher understands oral communication and interacts appropriately in the target language in various settings.

Standard 3: The competent foreign language teacher understands and creates written materials in the target language for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Standard 4: The competent foreign language teacher is able to use the target language to explain its structure in a manner understandable to a variety of learners.

Standard 5: The competent foreign language teacher understands manners, customs, and ranges of cultural expression of various target language societies.

Standard 6: The competent foreign language teacher demonstrates general knowledge of expressive forms (e.g., music, dance, folk art, visual art, drama and architecture) related to various target language societies.

Standard 7: The competent foreign language teacher understands representative types of literature and various media of target language societies.

Standard 8: The competent foreign language teacher understands the history, geography, social institutions, and contemporary events of various target language societies.

Standard 9: The competent foreign language teacher uses the target language to reinforce and further the knowledge of other disciplines.

Standard 10: The competent foreign language teacher uses the target language to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a variety of career options.

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